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ABSTRACT

For community colleges, crime on campus is a complex and pressing issue since most maintain open campuses with no physical security features, such as entry control points or fencing. Workplace crimes can take the form of robbery or other violent crimes, domestic and misdirected affection cases, employer-directed situations, terrorism, and hate crimes. Hate crimes, or acts or threats against individuals based on race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, gender, or ethnicity, can have an impact on campus life much greater than other violent crimes. Further, it can often be difficult to distinguish hate crimes from constitutionally protected rights to free speech. To achieve a safe campus, it is important to understand how to manage threats and recognize the different levels of destructive anger that individuals might display, from feelings of being upset to blind rage. In any threat management effort, it is also important that a proactive approach be taken and that individuals do not try to simply ignore potentially violent situations. In addition, campuses should develop a policy and plan for all employees to help them recognize and respond to workplace violence. Recommended emergency response procedures are included. Contains 14 references. A sample board policy and regulations for workplace violence are appended. (TGI)

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Workplace Violence, Hate Crime and Free Speech: A Proactive Approach

Written By

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The California Community College Police Chiefs Association presents
Workplace Violence, Hate Crime and Free Speech: A Proactive Approach

by

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 Harry Parmer, Chief of Campus Police, Saddleback College

Introduction: This presentation offers community college leaders a proactive approach to recognizing and responding to potential acts of workplace violence. The treatment also looks at the nature of hate crime on campus and how colleges can differentiate between issues of free speech and hate related crimes and incidents. A practical guide is included to help employees identify potentially violent threats which can be used as a trigger to implement a preplanned and measured threat management response. A sample workplace violence policy is also included.

Background: Crime on campus is a complex issue that community colleges face on a daily basis. Most California community colleges continue to be "open campuses," with no physical security features such as entry control points, card access systems or perimeter fencing. While this provides an atmosphere that encourages community involvement, it does nothing to restrict access to those who might arrive on campus and subsequently commit an act of workplace violence.

According to the National Crime Victimization Survey 1987-92 conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, nearly 1,000,000 persons were victims of violent crime while at work. And it may be surprising to some that men were more likely than women to experience violence at work. Violence in the workplace can have devastating effects on the productivity of the organization and on the quality of life of employees. It affects the working and learning environment as fear and caution replace friendliness and exploration. Clearly, if employees do not believe the college is a safe and orderly place they will probably be ineffective in fulfilling their role in the education process.

The Nature of Violence: Violence in the workplace originates from a variety of sources to include robbery and other crimes of violence, domestic and misdirected affection cases, employer-directed situations, and terrorism and hate crimes. More specifically, workplace violence is defined as verbal threats, violent behavior or physical conduct, which interferes with employee's safety in the workplace. Workplace violence includes, but is not limited to, making written, physical, or visual contact with verbal threats or violent behavior overtones. At many institutions the human resources department is responsible for implementing the procedures to comply with policy issues addressing reported threats or acts of violent behavior; convening and overseeing administrative investigations; and implementing any corrective action to remedy any incidents or alleged incidents of workplace violence.

Victim Characteristics: Violent crime victimization while working or on duty resulted in almost 160,000 injuries and \$55,000,000 in lost wages. These victimizations account for 15%

of the over 6,000,000 acts of violence experienced by U.S. residents age 12 or older. Some may be surprised that men were more likely than women to experience violent crime at work. Over 30% of the victims who were working during violent victimization faced armed offenders and a third of these offenders had a gun. In the commission of crime in the workplace, 16% of the victims sustained injuries and 10% of these injuries required medical care. Men were more likely to be attacked by a stranger; women more likely to be attacked by someone known to them. Of the women victimized at work, 5% were attacked by a husband, ex-husband, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend.

Over half of all victimizations sustained at work were not reported to police. When asked, 40% of the victims said they did not report the crime to police because they believed the incident to be minor or a private matter. An additional 27% said they reported it to some other official within the organization.

Hate-Related Crimes and Incidents: Like all institutions of higher learning, community college campuses are intended to be learning environments where freedom of thought, ideas and opinions can be freely expressed without fear from threat or intimidation. However, many college campuses today are experiencing a backlash of intolerance which replaces the desired erudite atmosphere with tension and mistrust.

Acts of violence that are motivated by hate or bias have an impact on campus life unlike most other crimes. In her 1995 address before Congress, U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno clearly articulated the impact of hate crime when she stated, "Hate crime inflicts an incalculable emotional and physical pain upon their victims. They rend a community apart. They tear at the very bond that makes it possible for us to call ourselves civilized. They are intolerable."

A hate-related crime is an act, or threatened or attempted act by any person or group of persons against the person or property of another individual or group which in any way constitutes an expression of hostility toward the victim because of his or her race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, gender, or ethnicity. This includes, but is not limited to, threatening phone calls, hate mail, physical assaults, vandalism, cross burnings, destruction of religious symbols, and firebombings.

The motivation behind the act determines whether an incident is hate or bias related. Although no one factor is conclusive, the following criteria, applied singly or in combination, can be used to determine if probable cause exists to believe that an incident was motivated entirely or in part by animosity toward the victim because of his or her race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or national origin:

1. Were words, symbols, or acts which are or may be offensive to an identifiable group used by the perpetrator, or are they present as evidence? For example, is there a painted swastika or derogatory words or slurs or graffiti directed at a particular racial, religious, ethnic, or other minority group?

2. Are the victim and suspected perpetrator members of different racial, religious or ethnic groups?
3. Has the victim or the victim's group been subjected to past incidents of a similar nature? Has there been tension or hostility between the victim's group and another particular racial, religious or ethnic group?
4. When multiple incidents occur at the same time, are all victims of the same race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation?
5. Does a meaningful portion of the campus community perceive and respond to the situation as a bias-related incident?
6. Does the incident appear to be timed to coincide with a specific holiday or date of significance? For example, Martin Luther King Day, Rosh Hashanah, etc.
7. Has the victim been involved in recent public activity that would possibly make him or her a target?
8. Has there been prior or recent news coverage of events concerning groups like the NAACP, gay rights, or demonstrations by or against the Ku Klux Klan, the White Aryan Resistance (WAR), or the American Nazi Party?
9. What were the manner and means of attack (e.g., color of paint, symbols or signs used, unusual spelling of words)? Is the modus operandi similar to other documented incidents?
10. Is there an ongoing campus problem that may have initiated or contributed to the act?
11. Does the perpetrator (if known) have a true understanding of the impact of the crime on the victim or other group members? Are the perpetrators juveniles?
12. Does the crime or incident indicate possible involvement by an organized hate group such as the KKK, skin head movement, Nazi Party?

Free Speech: In America, it is not unlawful to hate different groups, races, or cultures, and people have the right to say so. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides this right. In California, Article I, Section 2 of the California Constitution reiterates this right by stating: "Every person may freely speak, write, and publish his or her sentiments on all subjects... A law may not restrain or abridge liberty of speech or press." All institutions of higher learning must provide and encourage a campus environment where freedom of speech

and expression is pervasive. However, even on a college campuses, the right of individuals to exercise their freedom of speech is not without limits.

Section 66301(e) of the California Education Code addresses the freedom of speech issue as it relates to hate motivated violence: "Nothing in this section prohibits an institution from adopting rules and regulations that are designed to prevent hate violence from being directed at students in a manner that denies them their full participation in the educational process, so long as the rules and regulations conform to the standards established by the First Amendment." Section 76120 further provides that "....a community college district shall adopt rules and regulations relating to the exercise of free expression by students upon the premises of each community college maintained by the district, which shall include reasonable provisions for the *time, place, and manner* of conducting such activities." The section goes on to say the a district cannot prohibit the right of students to exercise free expression "except that expression which is obscene, libelous, or slanderous according to current legal standards, or which incites students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts.... or the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the community college."

Community colleges, therefore, can regulate *time, place, and manner* to allow for the orderly exercising of free speech and advocacy. In determining this the college should consider the privacy of others and reasonable precautions should be taken against practices which would make persons on campus involuntary audiences. Colleges have the legal authority and duty to maintain orderly behavior for the normal conduct of college affairs. Because of this community colleges can regulate speech that is inciteful, or in other words, speech that contain personally abusive epithets which, when directly addressed to the ordinary citizen, are in the context used, as a matter of common knowledge, inherently likely to provoke a violent reaction. This kind of speech is commonly referred to as *Fighting Words*.

Hate crime, however does not include intolerant speech. Colleges or any other government entity cannot regulate tolerance. Colleges cannot intervene to suppress, arrest, or discipline people because of what they said. They can, however, regulate anything that may be "disruptive" to the orderly state of the college. In conclusion, college leadership should focus on regulating actions, not speech.

Employer Directed Violence: Sadly, violence directed against an employer or former employer is a regularly featured story in the news media today. Community colleges, like any organization, are not immune from this kind of violence. Generally, employer directed violence just doesn't happen and usually doesn't occur from a single cause. It generally involves those individuals who have an established pattern or track record and have over time, probably exhibited a variety of early warning signs.

Please remember, there is no definite profile to determine if an individual will be more prone to violence in the workplace than another; however, a number of signs are often exhibited by

employees in a pattern of escalation that leads to violence. The most common warning signs are:

- A history of violent behavior;
- An extreme interest in or obsession with weapons, paramilitary training, etc.;
- Excessive discussion of weapons at work, carrying a concealed weapon, or flashing a weapon to test reactions;
- Making either direct or veiled verbal threats of harm, i.e., predicting bad things are going to happen to a co-worker or supervisor;
- Intimidating others or instilling fear in co-workers or supervisors -- harassing phone calls and stalking are examples;
- Having an obsessive involvement with the job, often with no apparent outside interests;
- Being a loner with little involvement with co-workers, with the possible exception of a romantic interest with a co-worker;
- Being paranoid, panicking easily, and often perceiving that the whole world is against the employee;
- Expressing extreme desperation over recent family, financial, or personal problems;
- Fascination with other recent incidents of workplace violence and approval of the use of violence under certain circumstances;
- An escalating propensity to push the limits of normal conduct with disregard for the safety of others.

A pattern in job performance deterioration such as unauthorized leave, excessive sick days, excessive tardiness, leaving work early, co-worker complaints, overreaction to criticism, avoiding associates may also be evident.

Forensic psychologists who have studied previous incidents of workplace violence provide insight in identifying characteristics of the high risk employee who may have an increased potential for dangerous anger expression. These individuals are generally males age 18 to 25 and 48 to 58; individuals with a history of substance abuse or emotional disturbance; people who are affiliated with or belong to aggressive gangs; people with aggressive or violent hobbies or interests; people with a history of violence in personal relationships; people with violent or abusive childhoods; combat veterans.

Additionally, the potential for dangerous anger expression may further increase when the following risk sustaining and escalating life circumstances are present: divorce, child custody battle, financial crisis, legal problems, housing problems, change in job status -- reassignment, demotion, reduction in pay or hours, etc., death of a loved one, fired or laid-off, chronic pain, escalating physical illness or disability, marital problems, bad job performance review, chronic personality conflict with co-worker or supervisor, chronic or acute job stress, and rejection or

anger responses from significant others or supervisors. The more behavioral patterns evident the greater the potential for violence. Therefore, begin to think threat management.

Threat Management: Constantly angry people feel powerless and whenever a person engages in violent behavior, he or she has chosen aggression over other alternatives. When a problem is detected, analyze the person, the work setting, and the social environment.

Anger expression is a normal human emotion. It can be expressed in two ways: constructively or destructively. Constructive anger expression is demonstrated by assertive and direct behavior that is problem centered, specific, and documented. The person expressing constructive anger is controlled in voice and tone, uses privacy, and properly times the expression. Constructive anger creates compliance, growth, understanding, and respect. In response to constructive anger target the problem. Involve key staff members, outline the specifics of the problem and set an appropriate time and place for the discussion. Control the delivery both verbally and physically, be firm if necessary. Document concerns and discussions and set follow-up meetings. The results that are desired are problem-solving, motivation, positive control, respect, cooperation and consistency.

Destructive anger is manifested by name calling, yelling, cursing, hostile body language, belittling, berating, and humiliating. It is usually focused on the direct, indirect, or perceived source of the anger. Destructive anger is usually a public display and a personal attack with generalization and categorizing. Destructive anger creates anger, fear, defensiveness, and rebellion. Destructive anger can also be seen in differing degrees of intensity. However, as the level of anger escalates, your response should correspond to the potential threat to your safety and to the safety of others.

The first level of destructive anger expression is when a person is *upset*, that is, when they display behavior that is different than what they normally exhibit. They may display passive-aggressive behavior, procrastination, sarcasm, they may show up late to work, be irritable and obviously frustrated. Their anger can usually be seen in their facial expressions, such as frowning, staring, grimacing, and sighs. Their performance on the job may be within normal limits.

In response, be proactive, don't avoid the situation. Meet with the individual in private and use reflective listening techniques to clarify feelings, issues, and concerns. Maintain privacy and try to direct problem solving while acknowledging the persons angry feelings. Discuss strategies that may redirect their interest, or reassign the individual to a different task or assignment. In responding to this level of anger expression you may not feel it necessary to document unless job performance is effected.

The second level of destructive anger expression is evident when a person is physically and emotionally *angry*. The behavioral symptoms of the angry person are now escalating and discernable. The person may engage in angry remarks criticizing others and the college and

exhibit more emotion and be less rational. Constant complaining, griping, bickering to others are warning signs. The person may experience difficulty concentrating, make more errors than normal, have tight, fast, jerky body movements. They may be consistently absent or tardy from work.

In response, consider a formal performance review and recommendation. If possible remove the individual from the situation. Acknowledge their anger, use a calm voice and express a desire to problem solve. Clarify the issues and be nondefensive and willing to explore and to look at all sides of the issue. If possible, temporarily reduce job-tasks, recommend or refer to other resources of help such as Employee Assistance Plan, medical or legal counsel. Allow the person to express their perception of the problem. At this stage of destructive anger expression you may consider filing an informational report with campus safety/police.

The third level of destructive anger expression is when a person is furiosus. Behavior symptoms are escalated to physical, emotional and psychological arousal. Their voice will be elevated, they may throw things, slam doors, make threats (ranging from vague to specific). They will likely have limited rationality and a combative and aggressive demeanor. They may be observed pacing the floor and have signs of physical agitation. A person who is furious may experience tunnel-vision and may talk to themselves and use profane and vulgar language.

Your response -- call campus security/police, without notification to the person if possible -- think of your personal safety first. If feasible, use the team approach, avoid confrontation and do not get into a power-struggle. Call colleagues for assistance or support. After the immediate threat has diminished, assess the employee for further potential for violence. Consider formal referrals, medical leave, time-off from work. In followup interviews, do not patronize the subject, be straight-forward and stay focused on the issues. Avoid making threats and document everything.

The fourth and final level of destructive anger expression is blind rage. This anger expression is usually demonstrated by assaultive behavior and/or destruction of property. Subjects in the blind rage state will make specific threats and have the means to fulfill the threats to completion. They are not rational and demonstrate a high level of physical, emotional, and psychological agitation. They may be intoxicated or under the influence of illicit drugs or narcotics. Some may not reveal their intentions and may not express ambivalence before initiating violence.

Emergency action is required at this level, think safety first. Call campus security/ police immediately (without notification to the employee if possible). If the subject has a weapon -- do what you are told. However, every situation is different and each individual is the final judge who must ultimately decide what action, if any, they must take to survive.

Once the threat is neutralized, the employee should be removed from the college property. A medical and psychological evaluation of the employee should be required before the employee

is authorized to return. If the threat persists, the college should consider petitioning the court for a restraining order.

Develop a policy and a plan: Recognizing that the potential for workplace violence does exist the primary emphasis of any organization should always be on preventing it from occurring. Nonetheless, the need to consider strategies for dealing with workplace violence should also be high priority. Therefore, every community college district should consider drafting and adopting a policy and a plan for recognizing and responding to workplace violence. The policy should indicate a zero-tolerance against any kind of violence in the workplace and that all allegations of workplace violence will be immediately investigated and that appropriate corrective action will be taken to remedy the situation. Emergency response procedures, reporting and investigating threats or violent behavior, and training for all employees should be detailed in the policy.

The following guidelines are recommended for each emergency response plan:

- Call campus security/police or local police/sheriff.
- If the incident involves a gun and it is safe for you to move, attempt to secure the immediate area. Lock classroom and/or office if possible, and tell everyone to lie flat on the floor.
- Provide first aid if necessary.

After the threat has passed, and it is safe to do so, consider the following:

- Notice and remember persons involved in the incident.
- Direct participants and witnesses to security, police, or administrative offices.
- Advise victim(s) of right to file a police report which could result in a criminal complaint.
- Secure written statements that are signed and dated from relevant persons. Statements should contain detailed facts, not conclusionary opinions. Statements should describe participants' actions. Witnesses should describe the event act-by-act.
- Notify Chancellor, President, and others as appropriate.
- As appropriate, provide for mental health counseling referral for those involved.
- Provide assurance that prompt and thorough investigation will occur.
- If a threat of violence was made determine who made the threat; against whom was the threat made; identify the nature of the threat, what was said, any physical conduct, etc.; names of witnesses, ascertain the time and place of the incident and any other relevant information.
- Supervisors should work closely with the college or district Human Resources personnel and proceed with an administrative investigation in a cautious manner to prevent defamed claims. Defamation occurs when a

statement which is communicated to another individual is false, unprivileged, and the cause of injury.

All employees should receive training on recognizing threatening behavior and on responding appropriately to the district's established emergency response procedures. Employees should know what to expect when immediate response is needed. For example, what is the status of the college security force: Are they armed? Who do they call for back-up? How long will it take for back-up to arrive?

Identify where the potential "hotspots" are on campus and give them special attention. For example, nearly every college has a child development/day care center. Estranged relationships often result in child custody battles which can erupt in violent confrontations. If you have a child development center it is likely you have one or more current clients that have a restraining order against the former spouse or significant other. Other potential "hotspots" include the registration office and the records and admissions areas, where the maximum work production must be compressed into a minimum amount of time to meet a specific deadline (first day of classes); Human Resources offices, where angry or disgruntled employees report to sign documents or are processed out of the organization for cause; and finally, any office that deals with parking tickets. In summary, take all threats seriously, don't make counterthreats, and take immediate action.

Conclusion: Community colleges have a legal and moral duty to investigate all allegations of workplace violence and to take appropriate corrective action to remedy the situation in which any employee is threatened. Like any organization, community colleges cannot tolerate personal threats or violent behavior in the workplace. While it is unfortunate that community colleges need policies and emergency response plans to deal with workplace violence, it is important to understand that an act of workplace violence affects more than just the victims of an incident. It can have a debilitating impact on student enrollment, organizational productivity, and employee morale. The perception of an unsafe environment can create social isolation, which in turn invites even more disorder and eventually leads to an ineffective and dysfunctional community. College leaders should consider a proactive long-term approach that brings all employees together to maintain a threat-free environment in which students, faculty, and staff can feel comfortable while pursuing their academic and social goals.

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SAMPLE BOARD POLICY

BOARD POLICY

(Your) COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

(#XXXXXX)

PERSONNEL

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

It shall be the policy of this district to immediately investigate all allegations of workplace violence and take appropriate corrective action to remedy any situation in which any employee of the district is threatened. To this end, the district hereby adopts a policy in which personal threats or violent behavior from another person will not be tolerated.

Definition of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is defined as verbal threats, violent behavior or physical conduct which interferes with any employee's safety in the workplace.

Prevention Program

1. A district officer responsible for assuring compliance with the rules of this policy shall be appointed by the Chancellor or by the Chancellor's designee.
2. Procedures shall be established for implementing a workplace violence response plan, by developing strategies aimed at the prevention of, and education about, potential incidents involving workplace violence throughout the district.
3. Employees shall be provided with information and training regarding the potential for violence in the workplace to:
 - a. Increase their ability to recognize the early warning signs of a potentially violent person or situation.
 - b. Show them how to record incidents indicative of a potential problem.
 - c. Encourage them to report suspicious incidents through the appropriate offices/individuals.

References: Federal Occupational Safety and Health Act
29 United States Code, Section 654 (a) (1)

Adopted: (Date)

SAMPLE REGULATION

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

(Your) COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

AR# ()

PERSONNEL

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The purpose of this regulation is to implement the provisions of Board Policy (#XXXX), Workplace Violence, by defining its components and assigning responsibilities for carrying out the policy. These procedures are designed methods of operations and processes considered reasonably adequate to create a safe, secure workplace.

1. Definition of Workplace Violence

- a. Workplace violence is defined as verbal threats, violent behavior or physical conduct, which interferes with employee's safety in the workplace.
- b. Workplace violence includes, but is not limited to, making written, physical, or visual contact with verbal threats or violent behavior overtones.

2. Designation of Responsible Officer

The Vice Chancellor of Human Resources is hereby designated as the district officer responsible for implementing the requirements set forth in this procedure for administrative investigation and corrective action(s) to remedy any incidents or alleged incidents of workplace violence.

3. District Emergency Response Procedures

The following are steps that the supervisor/administrator should take when dealing with an emergency violent situation:

- a. Call college police/security at _____ and local police/sheriff (911).
- b. If the incident involves a gun, lock classrooms and/or office if necessary, and order everyone to lie flat on the floor.
- c. Secure the immediate area.
- d. Provide first aid, as needed.

- e. Notice and remember participants and witnesses.
 - f. Direct participants and witnesses to administrative offices.
 - g. Secure written statements from witnesses that are signed and dated *and*:
 - 1) contain detailed facts, rather than conclusive statements,
 - 2) thoroughly describe participants' actions as they occurred.
 - h. Advise victims of right to file a police report, which could result in a criminal complaint.
 - i. Notify spouse or families of victims and participants, chancellor, presidents, and others with a need to know; i.e., Human Resources, district/college information officer, college nurse, worker's compensation carrier, and appropriate legal counsel.
 - j. As appropriate, provide for mental health counseling referral to the Employee Assistance Program(EAP), as needed for those involved.
 - k. Initiate appropriate progressive discipline, which may include suspension, a court ordered restraining order, or termination of the perpetrator.
 - l. Prepare reports or other administrative actions.
4. Reporting and Investigating Threats or Violent Behavior
- a. The supervisor* should assure the employee (alleged victim) that a thorough and prompt administrative and/or criminal investigation will occur, and should ask whether he/she has any suggestions for minimizing the risk of a threat or violent act.
 - * The term "supervisor" shall mean the individual supervisor or manager to whom the employee (alleged victim) customarily reports.
 - b. The supervisor will immediately notify the office of the Vice Chancellor of Human Resources and, if appropriate, initiate an investigation, in consultation with college police/security, of any reported threat of violence to any employee(s).
 - c. The Vice Chancellor of Human Resources shall advise the supervisor on any special circumstances required to conduct an administrative investigation and report the alleged violent behavior. Such circumstances may include directing the accused employee to remain away from the workplace while the administrative investigation proceeds.

- d. The supervisor conducting the administrative investigation should interview the reporting party and obtain information regarding the threat. Information obtained should include:
 - 1) who made the threat;
 - 2) against whom the threat was made;
 - 3) the specific language of the threat;
 - 4) any physical action(s) or conduct by the threatening party which would tend to substantiate that the individual intends to follow through on the threat;
 - 5) the names of any other witnesses to the threat or violent conduct;
 - 6) the time and place where the threat or violent conduct occurred;
 - 7) threats or violent conduct by the alleged perpetrator before this incident; and
 - 8) any other pertinent information.
- e. The supervisor, in consultation with Human Resources and college police/security should decide how to approach the accused. Fairness and due process require that the perpetrator's side of the story be told.
- f. Upon completion of the administrative investigation, the supervisor will confer with Human Resources and, if appropriate, college police/security, and an appropriate course of action will be determined. This may include disciplinary action, a psychological evaluation of the accused employee, or, if appropriate, the initiation of a criminal investigation. This may also include arranging for employee assistance counselors to assist those employees who have been threatened.
- g. The supervisor will report back to the employee (alleged victim) on the action taken concerning the incident.

5. Defamed Claims

Supervisors are asked to proceed with the administrative investigation in a cautious manner, working closely with the Vice Chancellor of Human Resources for legal assistance due to possible claims of defamation by the accused. Defamation occurs when a statement which is communicated to another individual is false, unprivileged, and the cause of injury.

6. Training

The Vice Chancellor of Human Resources shall be responsible for scheduling workshops on workplace violence, conflict resolution, and related topics.

7. A "Checklist" of Early Warning Signs of the Potential for Violence in the Workplace

Experts caution that there is no definite profile from which an employer can determine whether an individual will be more prone to violence in the workplace than another. However, the same experts agree that a number of signs often exhibited by employees in a pattern of escalation may lead to violence in the workplace. Having one, or even several, of these signs does not mean that the employee will be violent, but should be used to heighten concern. Certain conditions in the workplace can also suggest an increased potential for violence. The most common warning signals are:

- a. any history of violent behavior, or alleged violent behavior, exhibited by the employee.
- b. an extreme interest in, or obsession with, weapons; e.g., paramilitary training, weapons collections (often including semi-automatic weapons), and compulsive reading and collecting of gun magazines. If this behavior starts spontaneously or is out of character for the employee, it should also be considered.
- c. excessive discussion of weapons at work, carrying a concealed weapon, or flashing a weapon to test reactions.
- d. making either direct or veiled verbal threats of harm; i.e., predicting that "bad things" are going to happen to a co-worker or a supervisor.
- e. intimidating others or instilling fear in co-workers or supervisors. This can be physical or verbal intimidation. Harassing phone calls and stalking are two examples of this.
- f. having an obsessive involvement with the job, often with no apparent outside interests. Usually outside relationships fail or are strained. The workplace becomes the person's sole source of identity. Please be advised that this characteristic may apply to many of your best employees, including those who would never commit a violent act.
- g. being a loner with little involvement with co-workers, with the possible exception of a romantic interest with a co-worker. This interest will often be so intense that the co-employee will feel threatened and may report the unwanted attention under the sexual harassment policy.
- h. being paranoid, panicking easily, and often perceiving that the whole world is against the employee.
- i. not taking criticism well, holding a grudge, especially against a supervisor, and often verbalizing a hope for something to happen to the person against whom the employee has the grudge. One classic example is to hold a grudge over being denied a promotion, transfer, etc.

- j. expressing extreme desperation over recent family, financial, or personal problems. "Giving up" statements (i.e. "I've had it", "I give up"), threats to quit, depression.
- k. fascination with other recent incidents of workplace violence, and approval of the use of violence under certain circumstances.
- l. an escalating propensity to push the limits of normal conduct, with a disregard for the safety of co-employees.
- m. failure to take consistent disciplinary measures against threats of violence or minor incidents of violence; e.g., pushing or touching, which may or may not be associated with a sexual harassment complaint.
- n. workplace events generating great stress; such as, layoffs (downsizing), involuntary terminations, labor disputes, and transfers.
- o. workplace locations and activities which expose employees to the threat of violent behavior from non-employees entering the workplace.

ADOPTED: (Date)